THE MOABITE QUESTION

Die Aechtheit der Moabitischen Alterthümer Geprüft. Von Prof. E. Kautzsch und Prof. A Socin. (Strassburg, 1876.)

Moabitisch oder Selimisch? Die Frage der Moabitischen Alterthümer neu untersucht. Von Adolf Koch. (Stuttgart, 1876.)

IT was perfectly natural that the discovery in 1868 of the famous Moabite Stone, which created such a sensation all over the civilised world, should have made literary and scientific men wish to explore the dangerous eastern side of the Dead Sea. Hence, when Dr. Ginsburg set forth the importance of an expedition to Moab in his paper before the Geographical Section of the British Association (Liverpool, 1870), the Association willingly granted 100*l.* towards the contemplated expedition, and in the following year supplemented this grant by another 100*l.* But this expedition which took place in the beginning of 1872, contributed next to nothing to our former knowledge of the trans-Jordanic regions. The only thing which it did effect was indirectly to encourage the designing Arabs in their production of Moabite antiquities.

Travellers in Syria well know the pertinacity with which they are pursued by the Arabs, who in every locality offer all sorts of relics for *Bakshish.* Hitherto these antiquities were principally confined to coins, chiefly of course shekels and half-shekels, bronzes, armoury, gems, wooden utensils, and pictures from the time of Christ, made by eye-witnesses of the scenes described in the Gospels. Since the discovery of the Sinaitic Codex and the Moabite Stone, however, which fetched so high a price, and which have created a perfect rage among a certain class of itinerant scholars for acquiring like precious relics, the finds have in a marvellous way corresponded to the desires of the inquiring travellers. A few months after the Tristram-Ginsburg expedition, in search for antiquities and specimens of natural history in Moab, was fitted out on such a pompous scale at Jerusalem, where the object of the journey became at once blazoned about, a number of inscribed stones were discovered, among which was one recording Psalm cxvii. As Herr Weser, the Chaplain to the German Consulate and Colony at Jerusalem, is the principal literary and scientific agent, who not only tested these Moabite antiquities on the spot, but also forwarded drawings of them to Germany and finally, with Prof. Schlottmann, induced the Prussian Government to purchase them and deposit them in the Berlin Museum, we cannot do better than give this learned Divine's own words :—"The fourth stone is to me the most interesting. It contains Psalm cxvii. in magnificent ancient Hebrew characters, similar to those on the stone of Mesha. Who knows but that this stone contains the very original from which the Psalm was read and adopted into the collection of Psalms." (*Die Aechtheit*, p. 13.)

As the famous Moabite stone records a biblical event, parallel to the one recorded in 2 Kings, iii., a discovery was at once made which should completely eclipse the narrative of this lapidary document, and at the same time vie with the celebrated Codex Sinaiticus. Prof. Scholz, who has been working for several years on the Massoretic text of Jeremiah in its relation to the Greek Septuagint, was in Jerusalem in 1870. Of course he visited Shapira's Antiquarian establishment, and naturally enough inquired after MSS. of the Hebrew Scriptures, when lo, and behold! this honest merchant showed the Professor, amongst other ancient Biblical documents, a remarkable manuscript of the very prophet on which Dr. Scholz was commenting. Here again we must give the words of the learned German, but this time no less a person than "Professor of Exegesis of the Old Testament and the Biblical Oriental Languages at the University of Wurzburg." In his work on Jeremiah which appeared at Regensburg, 1875, this learned Professor remarks :—"Perhaps it is not beyond all hope that science will come into possession of the text of Jeremiah which the Septuagint translated. In 1870 the author visited the bookseller Shapira at Jerusalem, who showed him a manuscript of Jeremiah, written very beautifully, without vowels and accents, which he averred corresponded to the translation of the Septuagint. When I called again, after a few days, it was sold to an Englishman. According to Herr Shapira, who declared that he possessed evidence for his statement, the MS. is of about the time of Christ."

But though *savans* like Pastor Weser and Prof. Scholz were easily deceived by the Psalm Stone and the Jeremiah MS., yet it was soon found that to continue discoveries in the department of Old Testament documents was both unprofitable and hazardous for very simple reasons. It is well known, even at Jerusalem, that no manuscript of any portion of the Hebrew Bible prior to A.D. 800 has as yet been discovered. If a MS. pretending to be of even 200—800 A D. were to be forthcoming, the science of palæography is now so definite and unerring that it would be detected at once. Nor could discoveries of any lapidary documents which exhibited a continuous narrative in any known Semitic dialect be safe, since the science of language is now so exact that an attempt to impose upon philology or palæography is almost certain to break down. Hence if the rage for inscriptions created by the discovery of the Moabite stone, and increased by the Tristram-Ginsburg Moabite expedition, which left England at the beginning of January, 1872, was at all to be gratified with any chance of safety and profit, nothing was left to the dealers in antiquities at Jerusalem but to open up new mines. This was easily done.

Selim, who was in the service of the Duc de Luynes and M. de Saulcy, when these French *savans* travelled in Moab, and who had also been employed by M. Ganneau to negotiate with the Arabs at Dibon for the Moabite stone, was out of employment. Such an indication of Providence was too plain to be mistaken by good Shapira. Accordingly Mr. Shapira employed him at a monthly salary, to go to Moab in search of antiquities, and in addition to his fixed pay promised him a premium on every discovery. With such a temptation before him, this unmitigated rascal whom Drake describes as "a well-known scoundrel and forger," set out for Moab. No wonder that the search conducted by such a man and with such prospects, was eminently productive. In May, 1872, that is about a month or six weeks after the Tristram-Ginsburg expedition returned from Moab, a few specimens of pottery appeared at Mr. Shapira's depôt. In July the collection increased to 600 pieces, in October to 700 pieces, and soon after it mounted up to 1,800 pieces. Shapira was now enabled to divide the finds into three collections, as follows :—

Collection 1. Containing 911 pieces, 465 inscribed ;
„ 2. Containing 493 pieces, 60 inscribed ; and
„ 3. Containing 410 pieces, 68 inscribed.

These collections embrace urns and pots, figures, idols, and birds partly entire and partly broken. Some of these antiquities have found their way to Stuttgart, but the bulk, consisting of the choicest specimens and numbering in all about 1,700 objects, have been bought from Shapira by the Prussian Government for 22,000 thalers = 3,300*l*., and are now deposited in the Berlin Museum. Prof. Koch, the author of the second treatise under review, who visited Shapira's depôt in 1875, tells us that this dealer has now another collection consisting of no less than 724 pieces, of which 133 are inscribed, containing in all 4604 letters (Dr. Koch, p. 3–22).

The interest of science in these discoveries is immense. If these antiquities could be proved to be genuine, their contribution to ethnology, history, mythology, philology, and palæography could hardly be overrated. They would exhibit to us the history of the mental and moral condition of a country, which has played an important part in ancient times, and about which we know next to nothing from the incidental and fragmentary allusions in the Old Testament. Literary and scientific opinion in England has almost unanimously declared these finds as forgeries. In Germany, however, where so many of the articles themselves are deposited, not a few men of eminent scientific attainments believe in their genuineness. Some of the results of these discoveries have even been embodied in no less a work than Riehm's " Dictionary of Biblical Antiquities," the distinguished editor of which professes to exclude everything that is controvertible, thus stamping this contribution as veritable history. The divided opinion in Germany may moreover be seen from the fact that of the two treatises which head this article, No. 1, by Professors Kautzsch and Socin, is against, whilst No. 2, by Prof. Koch is for the genuineness of these discoveries. After a careful study of the question, we shall endeavour to describe as briefly as possible the arguments adduced by Professors Kautzsch and Socin against the finds, with which we fully agree, unless those scholars who believe in the antiquities can produce more conclusive evidence.

1. The Duc de Luynes, M. de Saulcy, Palmer and Drake, Tristram and Ginsburg have more or less searched the country, and could find no traces of such articles, though the Moabites were perfectly alive to the value which Europeans set upon the most insignificant relic of any kind ; and though these Arabs, as we ourselves can testify, scraped together and offered for sale the most contemptible objects bearing the semblance of a relic.

2. In consequence of the large sum which was paid for the original Moabite stone, manufactories were opened in Jerusalem and elsewhere which produced inscribed stones, pottery, and other relics. That such forgeries were constantly forthcoming is admitted even by those who believe in the genuineness of the pottery in question. Indeed, Prof. Koch himself gives a detailed description of some of them (p. 67, &c.).

3. There can be no doubt that Selim was perfectly qualified to design these articles, both by his previous occupation as a Christian artist of sacred pictures, and by his subsequent training under the Duc de Luynes, M. de Saulcy, and M. Ganneau. That such an undertaking would be in perfect harmony with his well-known character as scamp and wholesale forger will likewise not be questioned.

4. The extraordinary rapidity with which these Moabite antiquities were supplied by Selim, when nothing of the kind could be found before, goes far to show that they were made under his direction. Only a few months before, we ourselves visited and searched some of the spots where Selim pretends to have made these discoveries, and could find no trace of such antiquities. The American exploration party have been there since (1873), and could likewise find nothing.

5. Drake and Ganneau traced the spot where these antiquities were made, and declared that they were manufactured in Jerusalem, transported to Moab, where they were buried, and then exhumed and sold to Shapira.

6. The intermixture of the earliest Phœnician with later forms of letters of which the inscriptions are made up, betrays the clumsy and unskilful manner in which they have been put together. That Selim and his companions knew these characters is perfectly certain. Not only did Selim copy for Ganneau some of the veritable Moabite inscription, but he and others possessed a facsimile of the inscription ; and we ourselves have seen in the hands of Mr. Shapira and other dealers in Jerusalem parts of the *Transactions* of the German Oriental Society, Levy's " Phœnizische Studien," with fac-similes of various inscriptions, the fac-simile of the Eshmunazar Inscription, and the leaf from Madden's " History of Jewish Coins," which gives the different Semitic alphabets. These were carefully studied in Jerusalem.

7. But what confirms us in the belief that these inscriptions have been produced by individuals who simply knew the ancient alphabets but did not know how to compile a single sentence is the fact that, even under the immense pressure of Prof. Schlottman's great learning, the inscriptions have yielded no sense. So eminent an epigraphist, as the late Rödiger was forced to say, " that though these extensive Moabite texts are mostly written in characters, the value of which is perfectly fixed and certain, no connected sense can be discovered in them." (" Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morganländischen Gesellschaft," xxvi. 817.) The force of this remark will be felt all the more when it is remembered that the language of the real Moabite stone can be understood by every Semitic scholar. Prof. Schlottman, who is too scientific an epigraphist not to see the strength of this argument is obliged to resort to the expedient that the inscriptions contain " strong abbreviations and permutations of letters."

The most extraordinary part of the controversy is the indecision about the clay of the pottery. We should have thought there could not have been two opinions among experts upon this question. If the authorities in the keramic art cannot definitely decide whether a pot or urn is three years or three thousand years old, there is little encouragement for those who have lately paid such enormous prices for old China. But whatever be the result of the controversy, the treatises of Professors

Kautzsch, Socin, and Koch which it has elicited will remain valuable contributions to palæography, and if it should call forth any more such solid disquisitions, science will be permanently benefited.

HOOKER'S "PRIMER OF BOTANY"

Science Primers. Edited by Professors Huxley, Roscoe, and Balfour Stewart.—"Botany." By Dr. J. D. Hooker, C.B., P.R.S. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1876.)

IT is now almost universally admitted that the study of botany may be made an excellent training for children; but the extent of the subject is so great, and the phraseology has become so overwhelmed with technical terms that even those who have been the most anxious to see the science generally introduced into our schools as a branch of education, are much perplexed when called upon to determine in what way it can best be taught. Some think it most prudent to confine the attention of children to such points as may be observed with the unaided eye, or at any rate to such points as only require the help of an ordinary magnifying-glass; hence they limit the teaching of botany to a study of the more conspicuous parts of the higher groups of vegetable life, and leave the study of physiology and histology to a more advanced age. There is, no doubt, much that can be said in favour of this view, for in order to become fully acquainted with these branches of botany a much greater experience and skill in manipulation and experiment are required, as well as the use of high magnifying powers, than, it is quite certain, a child can be expected to possess. At the same time this limitation to so small a portion of botanical science has the tendency to produce in the mind contracted ideas respecting the true scope of the subject; for to a large extent it only admits of facts being heaped upon facts, without their proper connection one with another being made manifest. It is owing to this want of concatenation in the teaching that has led many to think less highly of botany as a branch of education than they otherwise might have done, and that its introduction into schools has not met with so much success as its more sanguine advocates could have wished to see.

The "Primer" of Botany by Dr. Hooker will go far to remove these difficulties, which have hitherto stood in the way of a more successful treatment of the subject; for in the simplest language, and with an absence of all technical terms but such as are absolutely necessary for a proper comprehension of the subject—and which, when they do occur, are always fully explained—the pupil is introduced to all the most important facts connected with structural and physiological botany. These facts, by means of a judicious arrangement and proper explanations, are made to exhibit their mutual dependence upon one another, and the work thus forms a continuous argument from beginning to end. Although the book contains only 112 pages, and is profusely illustrated, there is hardly a point in structure or physiology that is not touched upon, and so far as the scope of the book will allow, fully explained. A further very noticeable characteristic of the "Primer" is that the pupil is instructed to draw conclusions from information derived from observation founded upon experiment as well as from direct observation.

To teachers the "Primer" will be of inestimable value, and not only because of the simplicity of the language and the clearness with which the subject matter is treated, but also on account of its coming from the highest authority, and so furnishing positive information as to the most suitable methods of teaching the science of botany, and for the want of which the instruction given in schools has hitherto been too often of a most capricious description. Again, those who have the formation or management of gardens, set aside for botanical purposes, entrusted to them, will find the list of plants at the end of the book extremely useful, as it contains those which experience has shown to afford the best examples of the particular characters it is desirable to illustrate; they are also such as may be readily procured and easily grown.

If the "Primer" has long been looked for, the high expectations which have been raised are not doomed to be disappointed, and it may be confidently anticipated that its introduction into schools will determine very largely the direction which the teaching of botany in this country will take for the future.

M. A. LAWSON

OUR BOOK SHELF

Aventures Aériennes et Expériences Mémorables des Grands Aéronautes. Par W. de Fonvielle. Ouvrage orné de 40 gravures. (Paris: E. Plon, 1876.)

M. DE FONVIELLE'S name is no doubt familiar to our readers as that of an experienced scientific aëronaut and writer on aëronautics. In the work before us he has traced in an interesting and instructive manner the history of ballooning from the first rude attempts to rise in the air, down to the elaborate experiments and machines which have been devised at the present day. He has evidently spent considerable pains to obtain a complete knowledge of the history and methods of ballooning, and his scientific knowledge enables him to point out in the many experiments which have been made, the causes of failure or success. The work is evidently meant mainly for popular reading, and those who understand French will find it full of interest. The author attempts to show how practically to utilise a discovery which up to the present time has produced few practical results. He is quite opposed to all the fantastical projects which have been proposed and tried in aëronautics, and treats his subject, on the whole, in a sensible and moderate fashion, showing that those chimerical schemes have been really hindrances to the improvement of aërial navigation. He shows that important meteorological results might be obtained by properly organised ascents, and that indeed in this respect results of some importance have already been obtained. The numerous illustrations are interesting, and altogether the work may be regarded as an important contribution to the history of aëronautics.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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New Laurentian Fossil

MR. JAMES THOMSON, of Glasgow, who has been for some years on the out-look for fossils in the Laurentian rocks of Scotland, and has searched parts of Argyleshire, Inverness-shire, Ross-shire, and Caithness with this object, has lately been rewarded by the discovery, in the neighbourhood of Tarbert,